

# Traditional Foods Can Be Healthy



NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH  
National Cancer Institute

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Public Health Service  
National Institutes of Health**



Dear Reader:

We are pleased that you have received a copy of this National Cancer Institute booklet. We hope you find it helpful.

We are always trying to improve our publications. The best way we can do this is by getting your reactions. At the end of this booklet you will find a response card asking several questions. We would greatly appreciate it if you take the time to fill this out and return it to us.

All of your responses will be treated confidentially. We welcome any other comments that you may have.

Thank you in advance,

Office of Cancer Communications



# Traditional Foods Can Be Healthy

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# Living in Balance



**Traditional foods are still a way of life  
for many American Indians.**

**Keeping the body, mind, and spirit in balance  
and celebrating the seasons  
once were an essential way of life.  
Today, it is still important to be  
strong and healthy.**



# We Can Learn From Our Past

**During traditional times, American Indians rarely had:**

- Cancer
- Heart Disease
- Diabetes
- Obesity

*We need to eat more traditional foods today!*

**Why was this healthy?**

- Traditionally, American Indians were very active and ate smaller amounts of food than American Indian people do today.
- The foods eaten in the past by many American Indians were low in fat like fish and game (such as deer).
- The elders have told us that the amount of food eaten in a meal was as much as a person could put into the palm of the hand. That was much smaller than what we eat today!

**What can you and your family do today?**

- What types of traditional foods do you and your family use in your meals today?
- What types of foods could you and your family add to today's meals?
- How can you and your family reduce the amounts of food eaten?

# How Foods Were Prepared

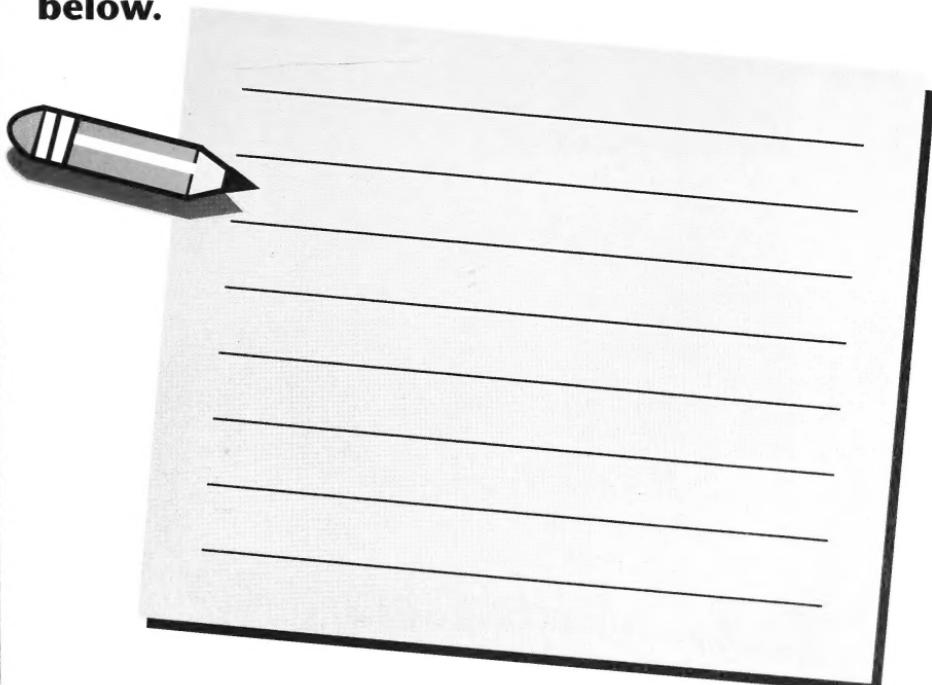
**Foods were prepared in the following ways:**

- Vegetables, meats and fish were smoked, dried, broiled, or boiled.
- Breads were baked.

**Why was this healthy?**

- Less fat was used to cook foods.
- No fat was added to foods which were boiled or dried.
- Foods did not sit in the fat.

**How can you and your family prepare foods to be healthy today? Write your ideas below.**



# How Foods Were Selected

**Foods were selected from:**



Below the Ground	Above the Ground	The Four-Legged	The Finned	The Winged
wild turnips	chokecherries	buffalo	fish (including bass, salmon)	turkey
onions	buffalo berries	deer	eel	pheasant
potatoes	plums	antelope	turtle	grouse
carrots	acorns	prairie dog		duck
	corn	squirrel		
	wild cucumbers	rabbit		
	asparagus			
	milkweed			

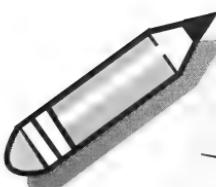


## Why was this healthy?

- These foods were low in fat.
- Diets lower in fat helped lower chances of obesity, cancer, and heart disease.
- A person ate many different kinds of food.
- A variety of foods provided many nutrients for good health.

### What can you and your family do today?

What types of foods does your family eat today which are from:



Below the Ground?

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Above the Ground?

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The Four-Legged?

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The Finned?

---

The Winged?

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# Physical Activity and Health

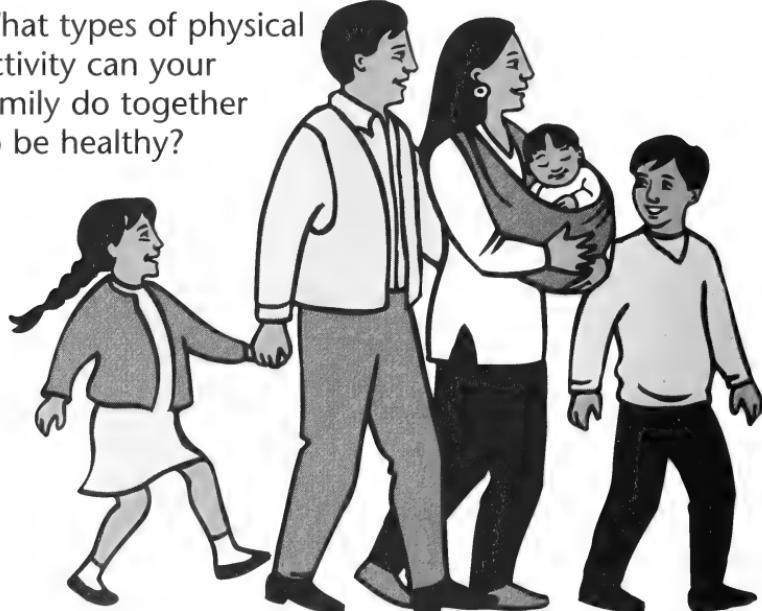
Physical activity was an everyday part of life. People walked, hunted, gathered, played games, danced, and/or rode horses. It was important to the community to be strong and healthy. Preparing food was also an active part of life—grounding corn meal, stripping meat, cleaning fish, for example.

## Why was physical activity healthy?

- Physical activity helped burn away body fat and calories from the food.
- It helped keep people lean and healthy.
- It helped the whole body work better.
- It helped people with their spirituality.

## What can you and your family do today?

- What types of physical activity will you do to be healthy?
- What types of physical activity can your family do together to be healthy?



# Traditional Foods in Today's World

## Foods like our ancestors ate can be healthy.

What foods make up a healthy diet? Use the following information to help you choose a healthful diet that's right for you.

## Examples of traditional foods that can help make up a healthy diet:

### Fruits

Chokecherries  
Currants  
Buffalo berries  
Cactus fruit  
Plums  
Strawberries  
Blackberries



### Vegetables

Wild turnips  
Onions  
Corn  
Carrots  
Cucumber  
Squash  
Leafy green vegetables

### Meats, dry beans, and nuts

Buffalo      Squirrel  
Deer      Beans  
Elk      Nuts (acorns)  
Moose      Seeds  
Antelope  
Raccoon  
Rabbit



### Fish

Salmon  
Bass  
King fish  
Catfish  
Trout  
Walleye  
Bullhead

### Fowl

Pheasant  
Grouse  
Prairie chicken  
Dove



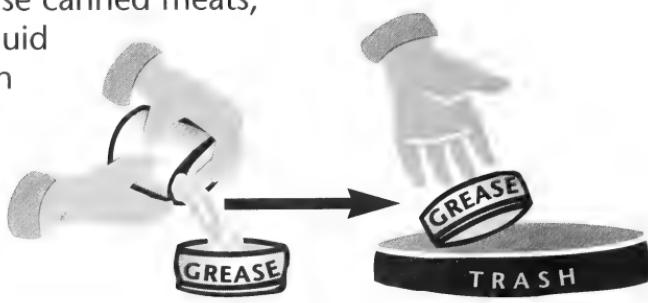
### Grains and bread

Wild rice  
Barley  
Wheat

## Tips to create a healthy diet

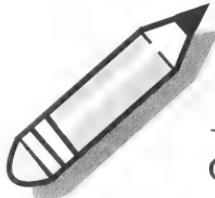
Today we get most of our foods from the store or as commodities. Here are some tips to help you create a healthy diet.

- Before you go to the store, make a shopping list for your family's good health. Choose foods from the Food Guide Pyramid and include traditional foods where possible.
- When you use canned meats, drain the liquid from the can and throw the liquid away. This helps lower the fat.



### My Shopping List

#### Vegetables



#### Fruits

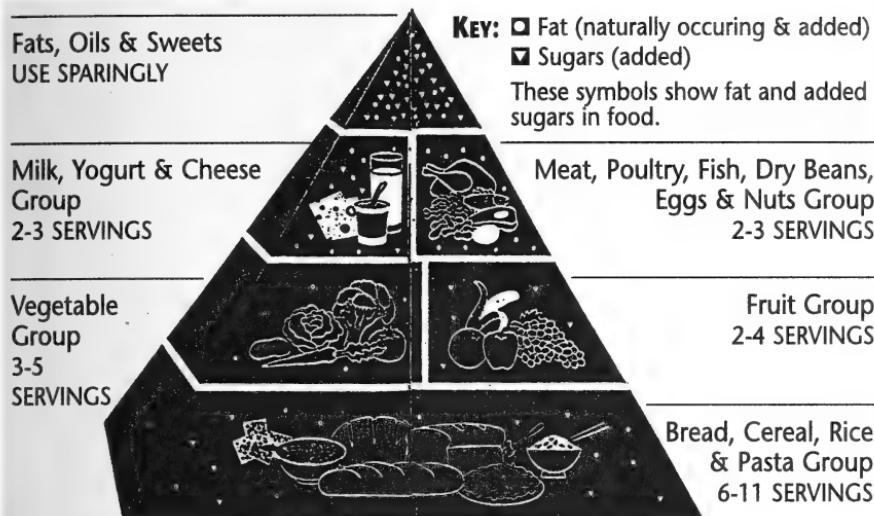
#### Grains and Bread, Cereal, Rice, and Pasta

#### Lean Meats, Fish and/or Fowl, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts

#### Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese

#### Other Foods

## Some publications of interest include:



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services

## What counts as a serving? Food Groups:

### BREAD, CEREAL, RICE, and PASTA

1 slice of bread

1 ounce of  
ready-to-eat cereal

1/2 cup of cooked  
cereal, rice, or pasta

### VEGETABLES

1 cup of raw, leafy  
vegetables

1/2 cup of other vegetables,  
cooked or chopped raw

3/4 cup of  
vegetable juice

### FRUITS

1 medium apple,  
banana, or orange

1/2 cup of chopped,  
cooked, or canned fruit

3/4 cup of  
fruit juice

### MILK, YOGURT, and CHEESE

1 cup of milk  
or yogurt

1 1/2 ounces of  
natural cheese

2 ounces of  
process cheese

### MEAT, POULTRY, FISH, DRY BEANS, EGGS and NUTS

2-3 ounces of cooked  
lean meat, poultry, or fish

1/2 cup of cooked dry beans, 1 egg, or 2 tablespoons  
of peanut butter—count as 1 ounce of lean meat

# For Additional Information

## National Cancer Institute

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### Action Guide for Healthy Eating

WRITE: Nutrition Books  
National Cancer Institute  
Office of Cancer Communications  
Building 31, Room 10A03  
31 Center Drive MSC 2580  
Bethesda, MD 20892-2580

OR CALL: 1-800-4-CANCER

## U.S. Department of Agriculture

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To receive one free copy of the following brochures:

-  **Nutrition & Your Health Dietary Guidelines for Americans**
-  **Dietary Guidelines and Your Diet**
-  **Preparing Foods and Planning Menus Using the Dietary Guidelines**
-  **Making Bag Lunches, Snacks, and Desserts Using the Dietary Guidelines**
-  **Shopping for Food and Making Meals in Minutes Using the Dietary Guidelines**
-  **Eating Better When Eating Out Using the Dietary Guidelines**

WRITE: 1120 20th Street, NW  
North Lobby, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036

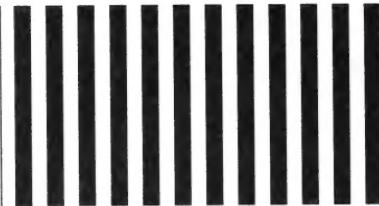
OR CALL: 202-418-2312

# Attention: All Readers

Please tell us what you think of this booklet.

1. The booklet was:  easy to understand  hard to understand
2. The information was  too much  too little  just the right amount
3. I would:  recommend the booklet to other American Indians  
 NOT recommend the booklet to other American Indians
4. I got this booklet from a:
  - Doctor's office, hospital, or health clinic
  - Pow wow
  - Small group or community gathering
  - WIC or other nutrition program
  - Calling 1-800-4-CANCER (Cancer Information Service)
  - Convention or conference
  - School (what kind? \_\_\_\_\_)
  - Church program
  - Other (please explain \_\_\_\_\_)
5. Did this booklet...
  - a. cover information that you needed  yes  no
  - b. make you aware of how nutritious American Indian foods can be?  
 yes  no
  - c. help you understand how to change your eating habits?  
 yes  no
  - d. help you make decisions about how to change your cooking?  
 yes  no
  - e. help you select foods when shopping?  yes  no
6. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How far did you go in school?
  - 8th grade or less  some college
  - some high school  college graduate
  - high school graduate  graduate level education
8. Are you a health professional?  yes  no
9. Do you think production of this booklet should be:  
 continued?  discontinued?
10. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions that would help us improve this publication?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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